

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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### MR. SCARBOROUGH'S FAMILY.

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

CHAPTER XLI. MOUNTJOY SCARBOROUGH GOES TO BUSTON.

MR. GREY returned to London after staying but one night, having received fresh instructions as to the will. The will was to be prepared at once, and Mr. Barry was to bring it down for execution. "Shall I not inform Augustus?" asked Mr. Grey.

But this did not suit with Mr. Scarborough's views of revenge. "I think not. I would do by him whatever honesty requires; but I have never told him that I mean to leave him anything. Of course he knows that he is to have the estate. He is revelling in the future poverty of poor Mountjoy. He turned him out of his house just now because Mountjoy would not obey him by going to—Brazil. He would turn him out of this house if he could because I won't at once go—to the devil. He is something over-masterful, is Master Augustus, and a rub or two will do him good. I'd rather you wouldn't tell him, if you please." Then Mr. Grey departed without making any promise, but he determined that he would be guided by the squire's wishes. Augustus Scarborough was not of a nature to excite very warmly the charity of any man.

Harry remained for two or three days shooting with Mountjoy, and once or twice he saw the squire again. "Merton and I have managed to concoct that letter," said the squire. "I'm afraid your uncle will find it rather long. Is he impatient of long letters?"

"He likes long sermons."

"If anybody will listen to his reading. I think you have a deal to answer for yourself, when you could not make so

small a sacrifice to the man to whom you were to owe everything. But he ought to look for a wife in consequence of that crime, and not falsely allege another. If, as I fear, he finds the wife-plan troublesome, our letter may perhaps move him, and Mountjoy is to go down and open his eyes. Mountjoy hasn't made any difficulty about it."

"I shall be greatly distressed—" Harry began.

"Not at all. He must go. I like to have my own way in these little matters. He owes you as much reparation as that, and we shall be able to see what members of the Scarborough family you would trust the most."

Harry, during the two days, shot some hares in company with Mountjoy, but not a word more was said about the adventure in London. Nor was the name of Florence Mountjoy ever mentioned between the two suitors. "I'm going to Buston, you know," Mountjoy said once.

"So your father told me."

"What sort of a fellow shall I find your uncle?"

"He's a gentleman, but not very wise." No more was said between them on that head, but Mountjoy spoke at great length about his own brother and his father's will.

"My father is the most singular man you ever came across."

"I think he is."

"I am not going to say a good word for him. I wouldn't let him think that I had said a good word for him. In order to save the property he has maligned my mother, and has cheated me and the creditors most horribly;—most infernally. That's my conviction, though Grey thinks otherwise. I can't forgive him,—and won't, and he knows it. But after that he is

going to do the best thing he can for me. And he has begun by making me a decent allowance again as his son. But I'm to have that only as long as I remain here at Tretton. Of course I have been fond of cards."

"I suppose so."

"Not a doubt of it. But I haven't touched a card now for a month nearly. And then he is going to leave me what property he has to leave. And he and my brother have paid off those Jews among them. I'm not a bit obliged to my brother. He's got some game of his own which I don't quite clearly see, and my father is doing this for me simply to spite my brother. He'd cut down every tree upon the place if Grey would allow it. And yet to give Augustus the property my father has done this gross injustice."

"I suppose the money-lenders would have had the best of it had he not."

"That's true. They would have had it all. They had measured every yard of it, and had got my name down for the full value. Now they're paid."

"That's a comfort."

"Nothing's a comfort. I know that they're right, and that if I got the money into my own hand it would be gone tomorrow. I should be off to Monte Carlo like a shot; and, of course, it would go after the other. There is but one thing would redeem me."

"What's that?"

"Never mind. We won't talk of it." Then he was silent, but Harry Annesley knew very well that he had alluded to Florence Mountjoy.

Then Harry went, and Mountjoy was left to the companionship of Mr. Merton, and such pleasure as he could find in a daily visit to his father. He was at any rate courteous in his manner to the old man, and abstained from those irritating speeches which Augustus had always chosen to make. He had on one occasion during this visit told his father what he thought about him; but this the squire had taken quite as a compliment.

"I believe, you know, that you've done a monstrous injustice to everybody concerned."

"I rather like doing what you call injustices."

"You have set the law at defiance."

"Well; yes; I think I have done that."

"According to my belief it's all untrue."

"You mean about your mother. I like you for that; I do indeed. I like you for

sticking up for your poor mother. Well, now you shall have fifty pounds a month; say twelve pounds ten a week as long as you remain at Tretton, and you may have whom you like here as long as they bring no cards with them. And if you want to hunt there are horses; and if they ain't good enough you can get others. But if you go away from Tretton there's an end of it. It will all be stopped the next day." Nevertheless he did make arrangements by which Mountjoy should proceed to Buxton, stopping two nights as he went in London. "There isn't a club he can enter," said the squire, comforting himself, "nor a Jew that will lend him a five-pound note."

Mountjoy had told the truth when he had said that nothing was a comfort. Though it seemed to his father and to the people around him at Tretton that he had everything that a man could want, he had in fact nothing,—nothing to satisfy him. In the first place he was quite alive to the misery of that decision given by the world against him, which had been of such comfort to his father. Not a club in London would admit him. He had been proclaimed a defaulter after such a fashion that all his clubs had sent to him for some explanation, and as he had given none and had not answered their letters, his name had been crossed out in the books of them all. He knew himself to be a man disgraced, and when he had fled from London he had gone under the conviction that he would certainly never return. There were the pistol and bullet as his last assured resource; but a certain amount of good fortune had awaited him,—enough to save him from having recourse to their aid. His brother had supplied him with small sums of money, and from time to time a morsel of good luck had enabled him to gamble, not to his heart's content, but still in some manner so as to make his life bearable. But now, he was back in his own country, and he could gamble not at all, and hardly even see those old companions with whom he had lived. It was not only for the card-tables that he sighed, but for the companions of the card-table. And though he knew that he had been scratched out from the lists of all clubs as a dishonest man, he knew also, or thought that he knew, that he had been as honest as the best of those companions. As long as he could by any possibility raise money he had paid it away, and by no false trick had he ever endeavoured to get it back

again. Had a little time been allowed him all would have been paid ;—and all had been paid. He knew that by the rules of such institutions time could not be granted ; but still he did not feel himself to have been a dishonest man. Yet he had been so disgraced that he could hardly venture to walk about the streets of London in the daylight. And then there came upon him, when he found himself alone at Tretton, an irrepressible desire for gambling. It was as though his throat were parched with an implacable thirst. He walked about ever meditating certain fortunate turns of the cards, and when he had worked himself up to some realisation of his old excitement, he would remember that it was all a vain and empty bubble. He had money in his pocket, and could rush up to London if he would, and if he did so he could no doubt find some coarse hell at which he could stake it till it would be all gone ; but the gates of the A—— and the B—— and the C—— would be closed against him. And he would then be driven to feel that he had indeed fallen into the nethermost pit. Were he once to play at such places as his mind painted to him he could never play at any other. And yet when the day drew nigh on which he was to go to London on his way to Buxton, he did bethink himself where these places were to be found. His throat was parched, and the thirst upon him was extreme. Cards were the weapons he had used. He had played écarté, piquet, whist, and baccarat, with an occasional night at some foolish game such as cribbage or vingt-et-un. Though he had always lost, he had always played with men who had played honestly. There is much that is in truth dishonest even in honest play. A man who can keep himself sober after dinner, plays with one who flusters himself with drink. The man with a trained memory plays with him who cannot remember a card. The cool man plays with the impetuous ;—the man who can hold his tongue, with him who cannot but talk ; the man whose practised face will tell no secrets, with him who loses a point every rubber by his uncontrolled grimaces. And then there is the man who knows the game, and plays with him who knows it not at all ! Of course, the cool, the collected, the thoughtful, the practised, they who have given up their whole souls to the study of cards, will play at a great advantage, which in their calculations they do not fail to recognise. See the man

standing by and watching the table, and laying all the bets he can on A and B as against C and D, and, however ignorant you may be, you will soon become sure that A and B know the game, whereas C and D are simply infants. That is all fair and acknowledged ; but looking at it from a distance, as you lie under your apple-trees in your orchard, far from the shout of "Two by honours," you will come to doubt the honesty of making your income after such a fashion.

Such as it is, Mountjoy sighed for it bitterly ;—sighed for it, but could not see where it was to be found. He had a gentleman's horror of those resorts in gin shops, or kept by the disciples of gin shops, where he would surely be robbed,—which did not appal him,—but robbed in bad company. Thinking of all this he went up to London late in the afternoon, and spent an uncomfortable evening in town. It was absolutely innocent as regarded the doings of the night itself, but was terrible to him. There was a slow drizzling rain, but not the less after dinner at his hotel he started off to wander through the streets. With his great-coat and his umbrella he was almost hidden, and as he passed through Pall Mall, up St. James's Street, and along Piccadilly, he could pause and look in at the accustomed door. He saw men entering whom he knew, and knew that within five minutes they could be seated at their tables. "I had an awfully heavy time of it last night," one said to another as he went up the steps, and Mountjoy, as he heard the words, envied the speaker. Then he passed back and went again a tour of all the clubs. What had he done that he, like a poor Peri, should be unable to enter the gates of all these Paradises ? He had now in his pocket fifty pounds. Could he have been made absolutely certain that he would have lost it, he would have gone into any Paradise and have staked his money with that certainty. At last having turned up Waterloo Place, he saw a man standing in the doorway of one of these palaces, and he was aware at once that the man had seen him. He was a man of such a nature that it would be impossible that he should have seen a worse. He was a small, dry, good-looking little fellow, with a carefully preserved moustache, and a head from the top of which age was beginning to move the hair. He lived by cards, and lived well. He was called Captain Vignolles, but it was only known of him that he was

a professional gambler. He probably never cheated. Men who play at the clubs scarcely ever cheat. There are so many with whom they play sharp enough to discover them, and with the discovered gambler all in this world is over. Captain Vignolles never cheated; but he found that an obedience to those little rules which I have named above stood him well in lieu of cheating. He was not known to have any particular income, but he was known to live on the best of everything as far as club-life was concerned.

He immediately followed Mountjoy down into the street and greeted him. "Captain Scarborough, as I am a living man!"

"Well, Vignolles; how are you?"

"And so you have come back once more to the land of the living. I was awfully sorry for you, and think that they treated you uncommon harshly. As you've paid your money, of course they'll let you in again." In answer to this, Mountjoy had very little to say; but the interview ended by his accepting an invitation from Captain Vignolles to supper for the following evening. If Captain Scarborough would come at eleven o'clock Captain Vignolles would ask a few fellows to meet him, and they would have—just a little rubber of whist. Mountjoy knew well the nature of the man who asked him, and understood perfectly what would be the result. But there thrilled through his bosom as he accepted the invitation a sense of joy which he could himself hardly understand.

On the following morning Mountjoy was up for him very early, and taking a return ticket went down to Buxton. He had written to Mr. Prosper, sending his compliments, and saying that he would do himself the honour of calling at a certain hour.

At the hour named he drove up at Buxton Hall in a fly from Buntingford Station, and was told by Mathew, the old butler, that his master was at home. If Captain Mountjoy would step into the drawing-room Mr. Prosper should be informed. Mountjoy did as he was bidden, and after half an hour he was joined by Mr. Prosper. "You have received a letter from my father," he began by saying.

"A very long letter," said the Squire of Buxton.

"I dare say; I did not see it, and have in fact very little to say as to its contents. I do not know indeed what they were."

"The letter refers to my nephew, Mr. Henry Annesley."

"I suppose so. What I have to say refers to Mr. Henry Annesley also."

"You are kind; very kind."

"I don't know about that; but I have come altogether at my father's instance, and I think indeed that in fairness I ought to tell you the truth as to what took place between me and your nephew."

"You are very good; but your father has already given me his account;—and I suppose yours."

"I don't know what my father may have done, but I think that you ought to desire to hear from my lips an account of the transaction. An untrue account has been told to you."

"I have heard it all from your own brother."

"An untrue account has been told to you. I attacked your nephew."

"What made you do that?" asked the squire.

"That has nothing to do with it; but I did."

"I understood all that before."

"But you didn't understand that Mr. Annesley behaved perfectly well in all that occurred."

"Did he tell a lie about it afterwards?"

"My brother no doubt lured him on to make an untrue statement."

"A lie!"

"You may call it so if you will. If you think that Augustus was to have it all his own way, I disagree with you altogether. In point of fact, your nephew behaved through the whole of that matter as well as a man could do. Practically, he told no lie at all. He did just what a man ought to do, and anything that you have heard to the contrary is calumnious and false. As I am told that you have been led by my brother's statement to disinherit your nephew—"

"I have done nothing of the kind."

"I am very glad to hear it. He has not at any rate deserved it; and I have felt it to be my duty to come and tell you."

Then Mountjoy retired, not without hospitality having been coldly offered by Mr. Prosper, and went back to Buntingford and to London. Now at last would come, he said to himself through the whole of the afternoon, now at last would come a repetition of those joys for which his very soul had sighed so eagerly.

## SHILLINGBURY SKETCHES.

## NO. I. THE TOWN.

I WANT to preserve some memento, something to the truth of which I can vouch, of the village life of England in the first half of the century. My village and the shapes with which I mean to people it, will be found commonplace enough; but as the memory of them is yet fresh and green, I will commit it to writing at once; for surely such people, such manners, and such tone of thought as I shall describe, will soon be as extinct as the bustard on our heaths, and the otter in our streams. When we look back at the England of Mr. Pickwick, with its famous country inns, its humours of travel, and its quaint local characteristics, we are tempted to believe that it must have lain nearer in date to the time of the first of the Georges than to our own day. "Can it be that Englishmen were ever as jolly as the people we read of?" is a question future generations will have good reason to ask. They were. I, who have known them, can testify to the fact; but they are changed now, and the reason of the change is easy to find. Nowadays we are all of us being gradually and imperceptibly ground down into the same likeness by the application of those forces of Nature which formerly were allowed to run to waste. The driving straps of the great grinding mill twist and glide into the remotest corners. Now every village has its post-office; every tenth one has its telegraph; every twentieth one its railway-station; and in the small market towns, to which perhaps two copies of a London daily paper might formerly have found its way, local journals take root and flourish. But even these are not bona fide local productions. The outside sheets containing the general news are printed in London and sent to hundreds of other towns besides, and the inside is made up of the feeblest small beer chronicle, made more piquant here and there to the local appetite by gross personalities and would-be caricatures of the more prominent inhabitants. More than once I have heard people lately come back from the Continent deplore the decay of picturesque local costumes in France and Germany. "All the peasants dress like the townspeople now," they declare. I am old-fashioned enough to sympathise with them in their regret, but I will ask them to join me in my lament over the same decay—much more complete, alas! and rapid—of the provincialisms of our native land.

I am not going to mourn unreasonably because Time is working with us after a fashion of his own, and not consulting my taste in the matter. Maybe he is working all for the best. These rugged individualities, these rough diamonds of humanity were no doubt the product of a life isolated and ever turning round in its own little circle. If a breeze from the great town world, or from strange countries beyond the sea, should come to ruffle their halcyon calm, it never called up anything like a desire of change; rather a sort of incredulous wonderment that men could live, and work, and grow old in a state of life so different to their own. The stranger was closely and suspiciously scanned, let him come in what guise he would. The old Romans used one and the same word to describe the stranger and the foe; and the people I shall have to deal with had certainly been fostering old Roman prejudices all their lives without knowing what they did, just as M. Jourdain talked prose.

I have never yet met anybody able to tell me why Shillingbury should have attained the size and dignity of a market town rather than Bletherton on the one side and Pudsey on the other. The same road ran through them all, and they all stood beside the same river, a river useless for purposes of navigation, and only remarkable from the fact that it converted a large acreage of good land into sour valueless bog, by reason of the string of dilapidated water-mills which barred its current. The largest and most pernicious of these mills stood just outside Shillingbury, and perhaps it was on account of this bad eminence that it became a market town, while Bletherton and Pudsey languished on as poverty-stricken villages. At any rate, I can find no better reason.

And as a market town it was a very presentable little place. The main street was clean and bright, broadening out in the centre of the town into the market-place, where The Black Bull on one side, The Crown and Anchor on the other; the chemist's shop, with its red, and blue, and yellow bottles; Mr. Springer's, the watch-maker's, with two gilt French clocks in the window; Mr. Tawner's, the saddler's, with its wonderful show of brass harness and huge bundles of carters' whips; Mr. Yardley's, the draper's; and several other well-furnished shops, made a brave show, especially on market days, when the stock would be set out to the best advantage.

Our market day was a great event in the

old times. Early in the morning the roads on every side would be pervaded by droves of bullocks, some of them with their coats still plastered with the mud of their Highland pasture, and flocks of sheep and lambs. Then about ten the farmers would begin to come in, and a dozen or so of pedlars, higgler, and quack-doctors' stalls would be set up in the market-place. The real business of the morning, the buying and selling in the cattle-market, was in itself a matter of too great importance to those concerned to be hurried over with inconsiderate haste.

"Well now, how are ye, Mr. Gotts? I ha'n't seen ye this never so long. And how's the good lady?" would be the preliminary greeting of Mr. Tom Hooper, a dealer, who had three-score sheep to sell.

Mr. Gotts returned the hand-shake with interest, remarking that he, himself, was "middling," and that the missis was "finely," the latter adjective being the one always used to describe ladies who had recently made an addition to the population. Mr. Hooper then went on:

"Ah, that's all right; and I suppose you don't happen to know anybody as want three-score good shearlings, do you, Mr. Gotts?"

Mr. Gotts here shook his head gloomily, remarking that he was sure he didn't, that shearlings was a very bad trade just now, and that he couldn't think what folks, as had got any to sell, was a-going to do with 'em.

Now all this was simply Macchiavellian fencing. Mr. Gotts wanted three-score sheep, and Mr. Tom Hooper knew this just as well as Mr. Gotts did himself; but had he gone boldly up to the pen, bid a fair price for the sheep, and bought them, after a five minutes' parley, he would have been made unhappy ever after by the haunting regret that he had not stood out for sixpence a head less. It would be wearisome to describe the gradual progress from commentary speeches as to the excellence or demerits of the sheep in question, to actual bargaining: the protestations of the seller that they were as cheap as dirt, and that he would not take a farthing less; the firm conviction of the buyer that they were as dear as poison, and that he would "go to sea" before he would give a farthing more. There was a bargain in the end; so it is probable they both gave way a little; but they wasted much time and told a heap of untruths over it.

Some people are inclined to rail at the dishonest habit of bargaining which prevails in foreign countries. I myself have bought mosaics in Florence; brass work, fresh from the rasp, but proclaimed genuine antique by the vendor, in Venice; filagree silver in Genoa; coral at Naples; and Turkish embroidery in the Cairo bazaars; and I unhesitatingly affirm that I have had to spend more time and tell more lies over the purchase of a dozen bullocks in an English market than in any of my dealings in a foreign land.

About one o'clock there would be a pretty general adjournment for dinner. The larger farmers, the millers, and merchants who came in for the corn market in the afternoon, would dine either at The Black Bull or The Crown and Anchor. There was an "ordinary" at each, consisting of roast beef and boiled mutton one week, boiled beef and roast mutton the next by way of variety. The masses of meat disappeared rapidly, for dyspepsia was an ailment not much known in the days of which I am writing. The stomachs must indeed have been robust which could stand a weekly drench of the port which our landlords provided for their market-day customers.

Once The Crown and Anchor did make the daring innovation of serving soup at the beginning of dinner—the landlord had recently married a young woman from London—but he soon discovered that the times were not yet ripe for such a change. After a few dinners, the guests at The Crown and Anchor began to be conscious that a quart or so of fluid to begin with did not quicken their appetites for the solids which were to follow, and when the patrons of the rival ordinary began to ask them jestingly how they liked being choked off with mutton broth, a hint was dropped to the host that beef and mutton were Englishmen's food, and though slops and such-like might do for town gentlemen, Shillingbury folk could very well get on without them.

Our shops depended almost entirely for their business on the country people who came in on market days. By the force of long habit our traders came to believe that they had a sort of right to the custom of the district, so much so that when a scheme was mooted to connect Shillingbury with the county town by a line of railway, a thrill of horror and despair ran through the bosoms of our leading retailers. Ruin to the town, swift and speedy, was pre-

dicted. The money which now flowed into Shillingbury would henceforth, all of it, go and be spent in the city. I fear this panic showed that the profits of retail trade must at that time have been a little excessive, certainly it seemed like it when a worthy grocer got up to speak at an indignation meeting, and suggested that if the worst should come and the railway be made, a clause should be inserted in the Bill to fix a minimum fare of one pound sterling for the journey between Shillingbury and the obnoxious metropolis.

The railway came in due course, and Shillingbury has not merely held its own. It has spread and prospered. We have a new corn-exchange, and new gas-works; our leading tradesmen have now plate-glass windows to their shops; and The Crown and Anchor has started a billiard-room. Poor old Figgins, no doubt, was sincere when he predicted our commercial downfall. What would he say, I wonder, if he were alive to know that one can go to London now in less time, and for about the same money that one would have had to spend in going to the county town in his day. And Figgins did not stand alone. There were many of the same mind, but they thought of the great heart of England only as a huge, cruel-hearted, blood-sucking spider, snatching at everything it could draw into its web, and giving back nothing. It has taken some of our money, no doubt, but this money we have laid out with our own free will, and we have had our money's worth in return.

I once ventured to hint to old Mr. Figgins that his prophecy of evil had not been exactly fulfilled, but he gave me a pitying smile, observing that all was not gold that glittered, that I was a very young man, and that I should find his words would come true if I lived long enough.

But enough of Shillingbury in general. I want you to know it, not by descriptions of its church, its town pump, or its national schools, but by making the acquaintance of a few of its more noteworthy inhabitants who were already well advanced in life when I was a boy, and of these I will begin to speak in my next paper.

#### THE HALLS OF THEMIS.

MERRILY rang the bells of St. Martin, and nobody seemed to care a rush whether he or she owed three farthings or any larger sum, or to fear any summary process for its recovery, for were not law and justice

taking a holiday, and all the world out in the streets to witness the gay and unusual sight? To judge from the dense crowds which settled in full swarm upon the streets and open places, not Royalty alone, which was about to pass, was in high favour and popularity—for that, of course, goes without saying—but also the complicated hierarchy of the High Court of Justice, towards whom it would be difficult to account for any emotional feelings. Not that justice in its higher manifestations is likely to be unpopular in an English crowd. Even malefactors have rarely any ill-feeling towards the judge who condemns them, and we are told that the lower ranks of evil-doers are rather proud of earning a sentence from a real judge; a throb of honest pride that no quarter sessions' conviction, or magisterial summary, has the power to awaken. But then we hardly expected enthusiasm, while here was a crowd closely packed and jubilant, ready to give the heartiest welcome to anything in the way of scarlet robes and judicial wigs. A sentiment perhaps rather loud than deep, but something at all events to be thankful for, as showing a healthy kind of circulation in the body politic.

And then the occasion was unique—such a house-warming has never occurred, has hardly been possible hitherto, in our domestic annals. All our judges under one roof, the various streams of justice that diverged so many centuries ago, soon to be united and flow onward in the same channel, everything brought back to that one royal court that was the origin of all! And the Sovereign herself resuming her curule-chair—if it isn't curule let some civilian who knows put us right—anyhow resuming her justice-seat for the moment, a moment in which we may dimly see, as in the witches' cauldron, a long line of kings and queens, with gold-bound brows, that ball and sceptre carry!

That suprememoment when the Attorney-General requested of Royalty permission to inscribe the event of the day on the record of the Supreme Court, is described by my friend Bagsby, who is proud to say that he was present, as being extremely thrilling to the legal mind, Bagsby being a country solicitor in whom a latent spirit of romance shows itself in investing professional matters with a certain roseate hue. But Bagsby would have gone farther in the way of ceremonial, he would have had the Queen actually to have taken her seat on the Queen's Bench. Something

might have been moved, an application in *Doe versus Roe*, an allusion that would have touched many hearts, and revived the memory of the grand jurisprudence of the mighty ones of old.

Bagsby's daughter is with him. Miss Bagsby is a rather nice young woman, with a complexion that recalls the hawthorn blossom, refreshing in this atmosphere of gloom. Miss Bagsby then does not seem at all impressed by her father's enthusiasm.

"The proper way—the only really nice way of opening the Law Courts, would be for the Lord Chancellor to give a ball—here in this hall—the grave law-keeper himself to lead the brawls, while seals and maces dance before him." "It would be heavy going over the stones," objects young Bagsby, who is supposed to be the cicérone of the party. The youth is finishing his legal training, with his father's agents in Lincoln's Inn; but inclines much to fiddling and theatre-going. And young Bagsby suggested that a musical dramatic performance, a precedent to be found in the masquing of the Templar students of old, say *Trial by Jury*, with an orchestra of young solicitors, would be the most appropriate house-warming ceremony. And there is yet time for either of these suggestions to be adopted. For the pot-hook is not yet hung, nor has the kettle begun to sing, in the new home of justice. Instead of the soft murmur of legal pleadings, we have the noise of carpenters at work, the ceaseless ring of the upholsterers' hammers.

But to leave the great hall—as yet without a name—a hall that suggests a cathedral nave, without its glory of light and shadow, and with a certain poverty of effect in its groined roof, let us leave the great hall and try to find our way through the maze. One dim vault-like passage succeeds another, with peeps into dungeons, and here and there narrow secret stairs and iron grilles that cause a shudder. However, a workman picks us up wandering in this stony labyrinth, and guides us to our destination, which is number nine hundred and ninety-nine, or thereabout, in the great quad. And the great quad is something of a disappointment; for in a quadrangle your mediæval artist is seen at his best, what with gargoyle and flying buttress, and pinnacle and turret, and quaint oriel and high-peaked roofs; but here all is brick-

work with white stone facings, not attractive in tone. A handsome range of legal factories, but nothing more.

However, thanks to an obliging though much worried clerk of the works, we are provided with a guide, who is to take us over this five-acre field of masonry, beginning with the extreme east end, where legal business has for some time been transacted. There is something inspiring indeed in the notion of a paymaster-general ensconced in yonder corner, with the millions at the back of him of suitors' money, who will pay out that snug little fortune of ours, when we get it, with so much sang-froid; of the Bank of England established over there—the mighty institution bottled up into so small a compass—where we may turn our paymaster's cheque into crisp new notes. The stamp-office, too, a branch of Somerset House, where you may speedily disburse that snug little fortune—and a good many such go that way—in judicature stamps. But yonder are the Bluebeard chambers, where judges sit and write disagreeable orders, which dispose of liberty and livelihood at the scratch of a pen. And higher up, up those stairs which resound with the constant shuffle of feet, stairs haunted by ill-looking money-lenders, Jew and Gentile, and a sort of people mostly keen of eye and sharp of claw, there you may take out writs and judgments and the like, or register bills of sale, or in some way or other make your fellow-creatures uncomfortable.

At the head of each staircase stands an official in uniform, in aspect something like a prison warden; one of a new corps of officials who are to supersede the ushers and criers, and other minor officials of the courts. Our warden is stern enough now, turning back everybody who hesitates or falters in his steps. Soon, perhaps, he will be soothed and tamed by the amenities of his position; he will fetch parcels for judges' wives, or ride a cock-horse with a young hopeful of a judge on his shoulders, on the way to find papa, or learn to smooth with dexterous fingers the silken folds or the bombazine of queen's counsel or portly senior; he will learn slang, perhaps, from the junior bar; or even come to tossing with lawyers' clerks for drinks. However, we are led past these stern sentinels, and find ourselves on what is called the court floor—the floor above the basement we lately passed through—a gloomy basement which, although actually

above the general surrounding level of the street, successfully assumes the air of an underground crypt.

Yes, here is the judges' corridor, roomy and gloomy, with judges' rooms on one side all ready for occupation, but not yet actually occupied. Miss Bagsby looks around with feminine curiosity at the massive oaken chairs, with their red sealing-wax-like leather seats, reminding one of the House of Lords' dignity without comfort; at the mediaeval grate, where a fire is burning cheerily; at the mediaeval cupboard, where the judge will keep his wig and gown, no doubt; with a hasty glance at the mirror inside; a mirror which, perhaps, will be long ere it has such a pleasant reflection to give back as this pretty, glowing face with the bloom of the wild rose upon it. On the other side of the corridor, we have Courts without end—half-a-score of them, that is, with as much difference between them as in the same quantity of oysters; some a little bigger than others, and differently marked on the shell; but very much alike in tout ensemble after all. So many rows of seats for the bar, a well, of no great depth but of ample capacity, for the solicitors; a big box on the left for the jury, and a small one on the right for the witness under examination; the judges' platform and canopy, all neat and handsome in oak panelling. High at the other end the public gallery, constructed to hold forty or fifty people, but reached by a corridor which has no apparent communication with any other part of the building. So that it is objected that when the stranger drops in who happens to be the very man who can upset the forged will, or prove the secret marriage on which the fortunes of certain amiable creatures depend, there will be no possible way of getting him into the witness-box unless by the other spectators knotting their handkerchiefs together and letting him down.

Now Bagsby père did not think much of this objection, but the daughter was evidently struck by it; her tender heart was distressed at the notion of the rightful heir being kept out of his rights from such a cause, and then Bagsby himself suggested the case of a man like Mr. Weller, senior, who persisted in making unauthorised remarks—how awkward it would be not to be able to have him down on the floor of the court and commit him for contempt. "Oh, you don't have us there," cried our guide knowingly; "there mayn't be no visible

way down, but yet there is a way." And he led us to a staircase and showed us that the core of the winding stair was itself hollow, and contained a narrow corkscrew stair that led to realms above and below. "So as if a man for cause is promoted from the strangers' gallery to the floor of the house, there's the means to get him down," repeats our guide triumphantly.

This point satisfactorily settled, we march along more gaily, although there is nothing exactly gay about the scene—the long corridors dim and dimly lighted, with here a coil of hot-water pipes, and there a hydrant locked up in a glass-case. "There are forty-eight of these hydrants about the place," explains the guide, "and if by chance there was alarm of fire, and nobody's got a key handy, all you've got to do is just to dash your fist through the glass." Exactly, but then it isn't everybody who would sacrifice his fist in the cause. "Well then, your boot you might," replies our cicerone with slight scorn. "But what is the good of having them locked at all?" "Why, for fear the judges should get playing with them and squirting water over each other." Miss Bagsby laughs, but her father looks serious, as if he thought that the majesty of justice was invaded by such suggestions.

With that we came to the end of the building looking out on Carey Street, with a glimpse of Portugal Street with its associations of Insolvency Commissioners, and the rest. A once respectable neighbourhood that had gone down in the world, and now comes to the surface again, hardly knowing itself in its new position, and likely to be improved altogether out of existence in course of time, to reappear in the shape of Elizabethan flats and Queen Anne chambers.

The other side of the great hall is similarly constituted to this: a row of courts, a double row of corridors, judges' rooms all round, and here and there rooms for consultations and conferences, a barristers' robing-room, and a fine room which hereafter may, perhaps, become a library, but which is more likely to be absorbed in the growing demand for courts. For looking at the total area of the building, the Court-space is hardly in full proportion, and already there is an outcry for more Courts, and workmen are at work altering and widening, and driving an opening here with chisel and mallet through thick walls of stone, and brick, and concrete in

this building which has just come complete out of the contractor's hands.

And with that we come back to the great hall, and look down upon it from the gallery, which is on the same level as the courts, and we speculate vaguely as to the footsteps that will some day throng over those tesselated floors—the lost footsteps of the future—hearing dimly, as it were, in some sea-shell, the rush and clatter of unborn generations.

And then we dive down into the lower floors to see what our guide facetiously terms the machinery for packing juries; how the jurors are carefully filtered through one gate, and left to cool in a bath-like apartment lined with glazed tiles, and then marched as they are wanted, upstairs and downstairs, and everywhere except into the judge's chamber. But then they have a special gallery in each court where they are permitted to take the air—a gallery which, on days of anything like excitement, is sure to be crammed with the fair friends of the litigants. And we dive down into cellars, still more gloomy and subterranean, to have a glimpse of furnaces and boilers, and a labyrinth of pipes.

But upon this Bagsby declares that he feels as if there were a weight of many tons of masonry on the top of his head, and is sure that for nights after this in his dreams he will have to support the whole Palace of Justice on his chest. And, indeed, we all find the place rather fatiguing, and are glad to find ourselves once more in the life and bustle of the Strand in search of light refreshment, and turning our backs on the solemn and gloomy Palace of Justice.

#### A QUESTION.

DID you know I came to meet you in the night,  
Came lone and wearily,  
Where the tall trees in the cold uncertain light  
Beckoned me eerily?  
Did you know I stood there, love,  
Where the stars gleamed thick above,  
And all around and all below,  
Lay the moonlight, white as snow;  
And a silence deadly still,  
Seemed the very air to fill,  
Only through the mystic hush of this, our trysting  
hour,  
The love that binds us two, in its plenitude of  
power,  
Watched with me cheerily?

Did you, far away, through all those leagues of  
space,  
Hear me calling?  
So very still and noiseless was the place,  
The sere leaves falling,  
Falling from the branches bare,  
Falling through the frost-locked air,

Falling to their mouldering bed,  
Dead things nesting to the dead,  
Almost seemed to start to sound  
The hushed world that slept around;  
All was dumb on earth, and sky, and field, and  
fell,  
Yet my spirit called upon you through the spell  
Us both enthralling.

Did you hear me, did you answer me, mine own?  
To outward seeming,  
This spirit bond we wove for us alone,  
This union teeming  
With the vivid fire of youth,  
With the steadfast soul of truth,  
With the power to endure  
While life is love and faith is sure,  
Is a thing as vague and wild  
As the fancies of a child.  
Yet, my darling, in the midnight standing lonely,  
In the power love has lent and lends us only,  
I trust our dreaming.

#### "WAS IT SUCCESS ?"

##### A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

DURING a certain August, when England lay in a haze of sunshine, a purple island in a golden sea, the great screw steamship Indiana was on her way home from Calcutta to Southampton, as fast as steam could bring her.

The passengers who lounged away the time on her white decks, and fed often and copiously in her gilded saloons, found their days pleasant enough, and flirted, smoked, and gossiped with an invigorating assiduity. They were all fairly prosperous people, each pleased with himself, and tolerant of his neighbour, as a man is apt to be under the soothing influence of a good balance at his bankers, and the impossibility of the said neighbour claiming any portion of it.

Comfortable Anglo-Indians! Patriotic, jaundiced colonels! Dear fair English girls who volunteer so nobly to enliven the banishment of our poor countrymen, the million blessings of the grateful Hindu are filling the sails of your ship to hurry you on to your well-earned repose!

Conversation on board ship becomes excusably monotonous; when therefore for the fifteenth time that week Dr. Teggett said to Mrs. Carden, "So you are going home to see your little daughter—eh?" she did not snub him, but subduing an inclination to yawn, replied as she had done fourteen times before:

"Yes, indeed, doctor, and I am afraid I shall find her a big daughter now!"

Dr. Teggett had been trotting up and down the deck, ruminating on many things, until driven to Mrs. Carden's side, as to a place of refuge from the repeated onslaughts of the dozen children who

rampaged around him; their manifold imperfections becoming hourly more glaring to every eye but the maternal one. Mrs. Carden, he knew, could put on a bright repellent stare capable of quelling the most turbulent little creature on board.

So he came and stood beside this lady, and with his thumbs thrust into the arm-holes of his waistcoat, slowly swayed himself to and fro, now on his heels, now on his toe-tips. He looked down on her in kindly but depreciatory fashion, as though he were saying in his soul, "You may be a nice little woman, still you have the misfortune to be neither Dr. Teggett nor yet a butterfly;" for he had a hobby, and that was the pursuit, capture, asphyxiation, and final classification of winged insects, and he considered that a man in possession of so fine a collection as his own was a man to be both envied and admired.

Nevertheless, he found nothing fresher to say to Mrs. Carden than his usual remark about her return home to visit her daughter, and she having given her answer, went on with the needlework at which she was sewing, quite unruffled by her old friend's scrutiny. In her youth Mrs. Carden had been much looked at by many men, and no amount of concentrated staring could now make her raise her eyes unless she chose. She was a woman whom women described as "So charming!" and two men had believed her to be the most perfect of her sex. Sacred to the memory of her second husband were those black bows which were scattered so profusely over her pretty white gown.

Near to Mrs. Carden stood an empty chair, which she had been using as a work-table, but now her work-things were on her lap, and the doctor hastened to secure a comfortable seat.

"I think I'll sit down if you will allow me," he said; and he sat down, first, however, removing the chair out of arm's-length of the lady. He was very prudent in his dealings with women.

Mrs. Carden laughed unfeeling.

"That is quite too bad of you," she said.

The doctor was somewhat confused, but being a man of quick resource he skilfully changed the subject.

"And so you are going home to your little girl," said he; "is it not probable you may find her a dangerous rival?"

Mrs. Carden put a stitch or two into her work, and then spread it out on her knee. She was embroidering an "R" in the corner of a handkerchief, and pensively considered the effect of the final flourish.

"Well," she remarked, "Rosie would not consider you very complimentary. I am sure when I was eighteen I should have been indignant had anyone compared me to an old woman of forty."

The doctor sucked in his lips and blew them softly out again, while he carefully elaborated the compliment which the occasion required. With him gallantry was not spontaneous; it had been cultivated by many years of application as a necessary professional adjunct.

"A lady's word as to her age must not be gainsaid, otherwise, my dear madam—"

The doctor's "otherwise" implied unutterable things; almost, that judging from her appearance he should have taken her to be just the age of her daughter.

"I am no longer open to flattery," said Mrs. Carden, smiling nevertheless. "With a great grown-up Rosie in England impatiently waiting for me to bring her out, I think it is time to grow old gracefully."

Here occurred a regular stampede of children who, like all little Anglo-Indians, were of the most unruly and obnoxious description of childhood. Calmly assuming that the doctor and Mrs. Carden had been placed there by a special decree of Providence for the express convenience of their young friends, the said young friends began in a wild follow-my-leader sort of fashion, to cut the figure eight around and between this obliging couple, nor did they desist until they had upset Mrs. Carden's cottons, and drawn tears of agony from the doctor, by dancing heavily over his corns. Then, satisfied with their prowess and daunted by Mrs. Carden's gaze of wrath, they decamped for happier hunting-grounds.

"How dreadful children are!" said Mrs. Carden, with a pretty shake of her ruffled plumes; "do you know I am so glad Rosie is grown up, although it does make me feel so old; but at least she has got over mumps and measles and general obstreperousness."

"Ah, to be sure; and yet youth is the golden time—the golden time, ma'am," said the doctor, shaking his head retrospectively; "why, when I was young the

world was a very gay place indeed. But as the poet says :

“ Ah, woeful when !

Ah, for the change since now and then ! ”

“ Yes,” said Mrs. Carden ; “ then I was waltzing half the night through, now I am going to take my place among the dowagers. Does not it seem dreadful ? And yet, do you know, I am quite longing to act the part of mamma ! When Rosie was little I don’t think I cared for her a bit, but latterly maternal instincts have awokened in my breast. I think it is Providence giving me a new interest in my old age.” Then her eyes fell on the black ribbon on her sleeve, and she added with decorous gravity : “ Of course she can never replace for me dear Mr. Carden.”

“ Oh, it is a capital thing to have something to interest you,” said the doctor. “ Now, I have my collection. I shall have a great deal to do arranging that systematically ; it is not a thing to be done in a hurry, as you might suppose ; it will require a great deal of thought, and a very great deal of organisation.”

Mrs. Carden gave a little inaudible sigh. Why were people so egotistical, and so wrapped up in their own concerns ?

“ How interesting it will be ! ” she said with fervour. “ You must let me bring Rosie to see all your Indian spoils some day. I do so wonder what she has grown like ! You know it is nearly eight years since I saw her. Does it not seem strange ? But I had other ties ; ” and she pensively fingered her ribbons. “ Of course Mr. Carden did not feel towards the child as I did. I wonder if she is like me or her father. You remember poor James ? ”

“ Ah, to be sure, poor Jim M’Kay,” snorted the doctor mournfully ; “ a very pleasant fellow too, brought me the Papilis Panthous, I remember ; got it from a man in Ceylon I think it was. Quite by chance, of course ; was attracted by its size, did not even know its name until I told him. ‘ My dear sir,’ I said, ‘ that is the Papilis Panthous ! ’ and I never saw a man take anything so coolly in my life ! He had a wonderful power of repressing his feelings—wonderful power ! ”

Mrs. Carden, too, showed a wonderful power of repressing her feelings, which were getting irritated. But she had a motive for cultivating Dr. Teggett ; he was “ well connected.” It will be found that this magical phrase casts a halo over many a prosy bore and washed-out in-

sipidity, and renders their acquaintance desirable.

So Mrs. Carden looked up with all the pathetic archness that had become her so well two decades ago (how the little tricks of a pretty woman outlive the prettiness ! ).

“ I hope Rosie is like my poor Jim,” she said ; “ it will quite bring back to me the dear lost days. Look, I have her photograph here, doctor, but it was taken so long ago that you will not be able to judge from it.”

She took a locket off her watch-chain, and Dr. Teggett gave the dim and blurred little portrait it contained a polite inspection, but it inspired him with nothing fresher to say than, “ Very nice, very nice indeed,” and even that he would have retracted on the rack. Mrs. Carden too, put to the question, must have admitted that up to three months ago her daughter’s photograph had lain forgotten in a desk where she had put it years before ; for up to three months ago Mrs. Carden had been the happiest woman in Calcutta, moving in the still glorious, though outer circles of viceregal society, with a house in the Chowringhee Road, and a smart victoria, and a husband who, when not engaged in the law courts, was almost as devoted as in the first days of marriage. Under these circumstances Mrs. Carden was naturally rather apt to forget the existence of her little girl over in England.

But Mr. Carden’s death put a stop to all these good things, and it was a happy thought which suggested that Rosie would now furnish her with a new interest in life, and she took up the idea with the same tenacious eagerness which she would formerly have devoted to the inauguration of a picnic or of a masquerade.

“ I think Rosie must feel very impatient with me,” she said presently. “ I think she must be sick of school. I know I hated school. But then I was such an idle girl.”

“ You are very industrious now,” said the doctor ; “ I never see you without some bit of work in your hands.”

“ Oh, that is my devotion. I am marking Rosie some handkerchiefs ; ” and she held out for inspection the “ R,” round which she was dotting a circle of rosebuds.

The doctor nodded his head sagaciously.

“ You’ll have to be adding another letter to that soon,” said he ; “ Miss Rosie will be leaving you before long. Ah, young ladies are like butterflies ; once they feel their wings, they are off.”

Mrs. Carden smiled a little ; she did not want to keep Rosie permanently to herself ; she considered a grown-up unmarried daughter a humiliating possession.

"I want Rosie to marry," she said. "I have been so happy myself as a wife," and she dropped a suitable little sigh to the memory of two husbands, "that I must not be selfish, and grudge the same happiness to Rosie. I only hope that she may be as fortunate as I was."

And Mrs. Carden sighed again, but this time it was a sigh of regret that she had been fool enough to refuse in early youth a certain Mr. Hodson Bowles, because he wore mauve trousers, and derived his money from the manufacture of dolls' eyes. Yet now he was a knight, an M.P., and enjoyed twenty-five thousand pounds a year ; and she had made this blunder all for the want of a little friendly coercion.

Rosie, she was determined, should make no such mistakes ; and gazing out over the sea, she forgot the presence of the doctor, and indulged in the most pleasing anticipations of triumphs and festivities, where her child would be surrounded by innumerable young men of the bluest blood and most satisfactory incomes ; and finally she arranged a fashionable marriage, and read a long description of it in the *Morning Post*. Poor little woman ! I even think she decided on the very costume she would wear on that interesting occasion, and was deep in the comparative merits of frillings and gaugings, when the doctor's voice broke in on her bright fancies.

"Yes, to be sure," he said musingly, for he too had forgotten his companion, and was pursuing his meditations aloud, "young ladies are like butterflies, only more dangerous, more dangerous. Now it requires some courage to begin such a collection of butterflies as mine is—some courage, and a great deal of industry and perseverance ; but I don't know that any man would have courage enough to make a collection of young ladies. You never know where you have them ; they are not stable—no, not stable. Once you have your butterfly you can fix it ; though to be sure, the colours fade a little ; but I think I may say I have discovered a process which preserves them better than anything yet known. However, my dear lady, this is a secret just at present, later on I have some intention of publishing a little pamphlet on the subject, and until then I would rather not have it mentioned."

Mrs. Carden laughed.

"You may certainly trust me," she said with warm sincerity. "I know nothing whatever about butterflies, and so am not likely to care to display my ignorance."

"Ah, to be sure !" said the doctor ; "you know the Indian proverb, 'Ignorance is an ornament to women,' and yet on this occasion I cannot help regretting it. The study of Lepidoptera is one of the noblest on earth, as the butterfly is the most favoured of created things. There is a passage which I read as a young man, and which I could repeat to this day, in which the butterfly is described as excelling in beauty the light of any of the most famous gems that ever from the brow of Eastern tyrant dazzled the dark eye of a trembling slave." The doctor rolled out these words with great complacency, and lingered approvingly over the last "Yes," he said, "to be sure, 'dazzled the dark eye of a trembling slave.'" And he repeated the passage through again from the beginning. "You and Miss Rosie must come and see me in London, and then we will go into the subject together."

Mrs. Carden thanked him prettily, but felt that the conditions of life would have to undergo some radical changes before she took to the study of Lepidoptera. In her succeeding conversations with the doctor, she very delicately kept him away from the subject of butterflies, and confined him to more human interests. Women are said to be very receptive, but Mrs. Carden assimilated none of his entomological enthusiasm, while she managed by unflagging perseverance to awaken in his breast a sort of lukewarm interest in her unknown Rosie, until he began to believe in a hazy way that this young person was destined for a very elevated station indeed, and once he found himself mentally cataloguing his treasures in the futile hope of finding something comparatively valueless to him, and yet sufficiently handsome, if given as a wedding-present, to reflect some credit on the donor.

When the *Indiana* reached Southampton, and her passengers dispersed, the doctor took leave of Mrs. Carden with many good wishes, and he carried away with him the remembrance of a smiling, radiant little woman in the best of spirits and the neatest of mourning toilettes.

Ten days after this, when Dr. Teggett had forgotten all about the little widow and her hopes and interests, for the Cardens and their affairs formed no integral

portion of his life, he, like the rest of us, having business, and pleasures, and family connections quite apart from theirs—one day then, when he stood at the bookstall within Victoria Station, deep in the perusal of *Punch*, which he had taken up from the counter, he heard a woman's voice, familiar to him, enquiring for a Norwood train. He looked round and recognised Mrs. Carden. He hurried towards her.

"Hi, sir!" cried Mr. Smith's representative with asperity, "are you going to pay for that *Punch*?"

Dr. Teggett found he had inadvertently carried the paper off with him. He went back and returned it with urbanity, for, having studied the cartoon, he saw no reason why he should buy it. The young man, however, muttered uncomplimentary things; he completely misunderstood the doctor's motives, and failed to see anything praiseworthy in this little trait of thrift.

"This is a surprise," Dr. Teggett said, taking Mrs. Carden's hand, "a pleasant surprise to be sure! And how are we, dear lady?"

But Mrs. Carden looked spiritless, and her forehead was set in frowns.

"I am very well. I am glad to see you," she said, but her voice was as inanimate as her expression.

"How is the lovely Miss Rosie?" he asked gallantly.

Mrs. Carden's brown eyes glittered with tears.

"Oh, doctor," she said, "I am heart-broken."

Dr. Teggett experienced a sensation.

"Lord bless me!" he said, horrified, "you don't mean to say the child's gone?"

"Gone!" said Mrs. Carden pettishly; "where could she have gone to? or do you mean dead? How can you think me so ridiculous?"

"My dear lady, really from your manner I feared something serious."

"And it is serious. It's just as bad as it can be. Oh, I shall never forgive myself for not coming in time to save her."

"Good Heavens! has she run away with the dancing-master?" ejaculated the doctor, fairly aghast.

Mrs. Carden was extremely irritated; she felt she should weep outright before all the spectators, if the doctor offered one such remark more; and yet she felt an absolute necessity to complain to someone of the hardness of her fate.

"Can you spare me the time?" she

said; "will you come with me to Norwood? I am going to see Rosie, and—and I do so want to talk to you."

So thus the doctor unexpectedly found himself again on a journey with Mrs. Carden, and this time in a condition of acute curiosity. He clucked with impatience while she was settling herself with every regard to comfort in the corner seat, while she took off her gloves, and gave each of her rings a little twist; he grunted when she slowly wiped her eyes with a scented handkerchief, and then carefully replaced it in the bosom of her dress, with the embroidered corner hanging out. At last she was ready, to his intense relief.

"No, she has not run away," she began sadly. "I wish she had. I mean I wish she had the chance. But no one will ever want to run away with her! Doctor, she is awful—dreadful! Oh, you could never believe she is my daughter."

It crossed the doctor's mind that the young lady must have a beard, or perhaps a pig's face, but fortunately Mrs. Carden interrupted him before he could form the idea into words.

"I was never so upset in my life," she said, "as when I first saw her. You know, doctor, what I had been expecting, what I had a right to expect, and then imagine coming into the room a great, awkward, heavy thing, rude, sullen, and insupportably shy. And to think she is eighteen, and I was going to bring her out!"

Mrs. Carden gave a sob and buried her face in her handkerchief.

"Bless my soul, what an affliction!" murmured the doctor. "Poor M'Kay was a well-formed fellow, too! Weak lungs, but otherwise well made. Perhaps it was a fall in her childhood?"

"She was all right in her childhood," cried Mrs. Carden petulantly. "It's the abominable way she has been brought up. Imagine putting her with a horrid, canting, sanctimonious woman like Miss Haversham! I shall never forgive old Mrs. M'Kay for ruining my poor child so shamefully. I only wish she were alive, that I might tell her what I think of her. But poor James sees it all, I dare say, and she probably regrets her conduct by this time."

Mrs. Carden, now well embarked on the story of her woes, sailed sorrowfully on, and the doctor, while throwing in an occasional "Lord bless me!" wandered off into mental speculative enquiries as to whether the soul of the departed James M'Kay did

see and deplore the personal appearance of his daughter, and whether, if so, he had found a means to make the soul of his departed mother regret her share in the transaction. Yet Dr. Teggett very sincerely sympathised in Mrs. Carden's disappointment. Since women are created for ribbons and admiration, it is certainly a terrible thing to meet with a girl unable to appreciate the one or to obtain the other.

"It was just there she stood, doctor," said Mrs. Carden, when the two Anglo-Indians found themselves shut into the drawing-room of Miss Haverson's Select Establishment for Young Ladies. It was in a large room of an exceedingly silent, well-regulated house—a room devoid of colouring, with a depressing white paper, and drab holland covers to the chairs, the monotony of its walls only broken by gilt-framed specimens of the striking ill uses to which time and a lead-pencil may be put. "It was just there she stood," said Mrs. Carden, "and never made the slightest movement towards me."

Dr. Teggett examined the particular square of carpet as though he expected to see some trace of the young lady's presence.

Mrs. Carden sat down with her back to the light, a study of prosperous despair.

The doctor trotted about and examined the view from the two windows, of which one looked out on to the gravel-drive in front of the house, the other over a lawn and shrubbery at the side. Across this lawn ran a troop of noisy children, led by a tall girl, whose short petticoats, together with the vigorous use she made of her limbs, gave her a somewhat comic appearance. Her face was hot and happy, and she romped with as much energy as the smallest follower in her train.

The doctor looked on with that pensive pleasure peculiar to age when watching the gambols of youth. He thought of his own school days, and not having read "Vice Versâ," he perhaps indulged in that time-honoured wish that he himself was a boy once more.

Someone entering the room behind him caused him to turn from the window. A lady was advancing towards Mrs. Carden, whose usually pretty expression was replaced by an exceedingly disagreeable one. She shook hands coldly and murmured a grudging introduction: "Dr. Teggett—Miss Haverson." Then she sat down again and looked as blank as she possibly could.

Miss Haverson made a movement as though to take a place on the sofa by her side, but finding that her visitor made no attempt to withdraw her spreading skirts, she quietly took a seat elsewhere.

"Dear Rosa is in the garden," she said, looking alternately at Mrs. Carden and Dr. Teggett with gentle deprecation. "Since she received your letter this morning she has been unable to settle quietly to work, and yet she is a very good industrious child as a rule, though a little excitable."

While Miss Haverson was speaking the doctor examined her covertly through his glasses. Mrs. Carden's animadversions were fresh in his mind. He saw a thin mild-looking gentlewoman on whose pale face sectarianism and ill-health struggled for pre-eminence. Her age was uncertain, her figure angular, her dress homely; but these details were obscured by a certain soft earnestness of manner, which, combined with the persuasive, rather lingering tones of her voice, betrayed a soul accustomed to much spiritual wrestling.

"Your little people seem to be enjoying themselves out there," said the doctor, who felt bound to say something, since Mrs. Carden was so deeply engaged in studying the curtain-poles.

"I trust they are all happy here," said Miss Haverson, turning to him. "To-day I have given them extra play-time on Rosie's account, because she is so soon to leave us. They will all regret her very much, and it is a grief to me. But, as I tell them, her right place is now with her mother. I hope—nay, I am confident, madam, that she will prove the same comfort to you that she has been to us."

Mrs. Carden gave a little stare.

"Rosa is very far from perfect," she said coldly.

"Which among us is that?" said Miss Haverson. "Yet the ground is well prepared, and we must wait trustingly for the harvest. Rosie is a true Christian. She has always found her best reading in *The Book*."

The speaker's mild eyes turned confidently to her hearers for approval. Mrs. Carden had listened perforce, but her small amount of sympathy was expressed very clearly in her listless expression and weary figure. The doctor polished his spectacles on his silk handkerchief and shook his head thoughtfully. He had never associated with very religious people, and where he was ignorant he was naturally suspicious.

Gay shouts from the garden attracted Miss Haverson's attention.

"I will go and fetch Rosie in, if you will excuse me," she said, rising. "She will be so glad to know you are here."

The gentle lady stepped out by the side-window, walking delicately, with her stuff gown carefully gathered up lest it should be soiled by contact with the grass.

"Ridiculous woman!" said Mrs. Carden, who watched her for a moment and then returned to the sofa. She felt too full of resentment to talk. Dr. Teggett remained by the window and saw the children rush out again from behind a clump of laurels, and the big girl pounce on Miss Haverson and hug her vigorously. He had a presentiment that this girl was "Rosie." There was much noise and laughter from the little group, but presently all the younger children returned to their games, only the big girl remained, and she, with an arm placed protectingly round the governess's waist, came slowly towards the house. They did not make for the open window, but skirted a corner of the lawn and disappeared behind an angle of the wall. The doctor resumed his seat by Mrs. Carden. She still wore her mask of frigid abstraction, and he said a few words to cheer her. Then, all at once, he was irresistibly tickled at the odd turn things had taken; that he should find himself administering consolation on the very subject which only three weeks before had exhausted all her adjectives to extol, struck him as sufficiently amusing; he would have pointed it out to her, but he reflected that no woman can ever see the humorous side of a situation which is displeasing to herself.

Footsteps were heard along the hall, and the door was thrown open.

"Do please go in first! Oh, do, please!" said a husky voice.

Miss Haverson entered and paused.

"Come, dear child," she said, turning back, and then someone seemed to tumble in, the door shut to with a bang, and a big, black-browed girl, burning with blushes down to her finger-tips, stood just within the room, and made no effort to advance.

Miss Haverson gave her a gentle push forward.

"Go and welcome your dear mamma," she said.

Mrs. Carden got up, mournfully willing to be embraced, but her daughter only held a cheek ungraciously towards her, so she was obliged to place a kiss where best

she could, and this was on a red ear and bit of tangled hair.

"Will you not shake hands with Dr. Teggett? He is a very old friend of mine, and has been kind enough to come and see you."

The girl extended an unwilling hand and withdrew it instantly; then she plumped down into a chair as far as possible from her mother, and twisted her long red fingers nervously together.

Mrs. Carden watched her ungainly movements with poignant distress.

"How do you find Rosie looking?" enquired Miss Haverson confidently. "I think she had a little bit of a cough when you were here before, but to-day she has got all her colour back."

"With interest," thought the doctor, examining through his glasses Miss Rosie's face, purple with blushes from brow to chin.

"I can't tell how she is looking," said Mrs. Carden peevishly. "How does she generally look? Does she often get colds?"

"It is only this last year she has suffered from them. I think it is because she is growing so fast. Stand up, dear child, and let us see how tall you are."

The girl rose for an instant, and then dropped back into her seat with a scowl. Her face was round and dark, and her thick black eyebrows lay across her forehead like a bar. The muscles of her mouth twitched nervously as she wound her fingers together, or pulled at a pleat in her dress. Certainly, thought the doctor, an unpromising piece of material out of which to fashion one of next season's débântantes.

"Dear me!" sighed Mrs. Carden, "you must promise not to grow any more, Rosa, or I shall be quite afraid to take you home with me."

"I say, Miss Haverson," said the girl in an eager, audible whisper, "I am not going away from here, am I?"

"Certainly not at present," said her mother; "until you have some decent clothes I should be very sorry to have you with me. But that will only be the affair of a couple of weeks, I suppose."

"Oh, Miss Haverson!" muttered Rosa in a choking voice, while strange convulsive movements passed over her face.

"My love, you are no longer a child," said Miss Haverson persuasively; "it is time for you to take your place with your mother in the world."

Rosa suddenly began to sob with great earnestness and noise.

A woman's tears are popularly supposed to appeal to our tenderest sentiments, yet the audible weeping of this big girl, her short petticoats, thick ankles, and reddening nose, excited, I regret to say, in the doctor's breast an unmanly inclination to smile.

"What an odious exhibition!" murmured Mrs. Carden as she gathered up her little possessions, and shook out her flounces. "I am quite ashamed, doctor, you should witness it. I cannot compliment you, Miss Haverson, on Rosa's good sense. She is ridiculously childish!"

Mrs. Carden swept from the room with much dignity.

"I am so grieved, dear madam," said Miss Haverson, following her out into the hall; "but, indeed, you must not feel discouraged. When Rosa has overcome her timidity, she will, I am sure, be a good daughter to you. She is a very affectionate child."

"I am very much discouraged," retorted Mrs. Carden; "I have been miserably taken in!" and then she made the gentle lady an elaborate bow and departed. But when alone with the doctor her dignity broke down, and she gracefully shed tears into her scented handkerchief.

"Is she not awful! hopeless! dreadful!" she cried, alluding to Rosa. "Did you notice her coarse hands and feet? her hideous black hair? And then what a deplorably loose figure! Oh, my dear friend! what have I done to be so abominably treated? Fancy coming all the way from India for the sake of a girl like that! I declare I shall let her stay at school for the rest of her life!"

### JACK.

IN the midst of writing on a very different subject, it suddenly occurs to me, both as a duty and a relief, to take another sheet of paper and say a few words about Jack.

He is only a poor toad, and not a rare or "scientific" toad, either; not quite *Bufo vulgaris*, certainly, but only one step above it, *Bufo calamita*, our only other English representative of the genus, or, in good old Anglo-Saxon, a "natterjack." I purchased him at the beginning of the summer within the classic precincts of Seven Dials, a locality which has many pleasant early reptilian reminiscences for me, though its prolonged survival in its

present aspect is assuredly one of the foulest smears on the map of civilisation's progress in London. Why I bought him I should be puzzled to say. "Better have a natterjack!" urged the dealer from whom I was getting a little stock of salamanders, tree-frogs, and other small deer, for a fernery; "better have a natterjack in with 'em!" he repeated, in spite of my asseverations that I wanted nothing of the sort. "Genelman bought two here last month; says he never had such fun in his life, and they comes out every morning on his breakfass-table and eats worms off a plate, tame as Christians. You'd much better have a natterjack, sir!"

So, without exactly seeing how existent conditions in general were to be ameliorated by such acquisition, or pausing to reflect on the domestic economy of the gentleman whose keen sense of humour led him to breakfast with his vermicorous protégés, I suffered myself to be overpersuaded, and Jack, fished up from the depths of a turf-basket and brought to light with that air of tranquil surprise on his face which distinguishes his kind, was tumbled into the can, where he immediately burrowed comfortably under the remonstrant *gradientia*, and made himself at home. "What is the difference between a natterjack and a common toad?" I asked the good woman, while her husband had dived down through a trap-door into some fetid abyss beneath the shop in quest of meal-worms. "Why, it's a different specie, of course!" she returned in a somewhat injured tone; "natterjacks is sixpence, and commoners is only a penny!" Here, however, a ventriloquial sort of voice below was heard to declare that the choicer reptile displayed a yellow stripe down the back; presently adding, as the owner's head rose to the surface—by way, as I understood it, of apology for the scanty zoological information conveyed in the definition that "natterjacks is sixpence," and at the same time inferring competent authority in himself—that "the missus didn't know much."

Be that as it may, I do not regret the investment of that humble coin. Jack is of a retiring disposition during the daytime, and remains buried at the very bottom of the case, so that, although an outward and visible sign of his existence is occasionally manifested by the progressive waves of a small earthquake

among the sods of grass and ferns, he cannot be said to add much to the sociability of the household; indeed, if any attempt be made to dig him up, he resents such interference in the most marked manner, and if unsuccessful in eluding fingers which excavate in his wake, he will even "swelter," that is, cause that acrid moisture to exude from the glands on the skin of the back which constitutes a toad's sole means of defence when attacked, and the appearance of which is always a sign of irritation. But late at night, when all is quiet and I am writing here alone, he comes up and sits on a pinnacle of cork at the top of the case, looking at me through the glass; and the gleam of his little palpitating silver throat, twinkling out of the deep shadowy recess of the window, catches my eye as I glance up from my work.

I say "looking at me," because there is nobody else for him to look at. Let not the reader imagine that I mean to assert that Jack behaves any differently towards me individually to what he would in the case of other people who handled him kindly, and with respect to his batrachian prejudices. I don't suppose for an instant that he knows me or distinguishes my voice from that of any other person; to do so would be to overrate the poor brute's degree of intelligence. Nor is his conduct to be looked upon as the result of any great amount of taming which has been exercised; toads are always tame enough from the first—at any rate, they necessarily always appear to be so, since their opportunities for expressing emotion of any kind are exceedingly limited. Of one thing, however, I am persuaded, and that is, that he has learned to associate my rising and coming towards him with the idea of liberty—for I have long since recognised Jack as a character in his small and unpretentious way, and his nocturnal promenade has become an institution. When he sees me coming, he rises on his hind-legs and paws the glass excitedly, his sheeny mottled lavender-grey vest standing out in bright relief from the blackness behind; but no sooner have I opened the case than he subsides again into a squat ball, and wrinkles up the skin at the back of his head. Why is this? Because I always greet him with a gentle friction of his loose rugose integument—on the same instinct, I suppose, that leads one to pat a dog or stroke a cat; but I am afraid that Jack has no very high opinion of this form

of salutation. At any rate, he ejaculates "Warr!" as if much relieved, when it is over, and climbs hurriedly on to my hand, for conveyance to the table. But it not unfrequently happens that he is by no means presentable at this stage, newly risen as he is from the subterraneous peregrinations of the day, and adventitiously clothed with a thick envelope of mould, the possible transference of which to my MS. would by no means enhance its likelihood of editorial acceptance. An old shaving-brush and a damp cloth, lying in readiness at the bottom of the waste-paper basket, have therefore become part of the institution, and he submits to be washed and dusted with a ludicrous assumption of docility, shutting his eyes and screwing up his face like a child under similar circumstances when the passage of a soapy palm over its countenance is impending. And now follows the reward of virtue, in the shape of half-a-dozen of those clean curly little maggots known as meal-worms.

Did you ever see a toad eat? It is the most absurd performance. First, a reflective look at the animated victual (it must be alive) over one shoulder, as it were—suggestive of being suddenly struck by an idea that the subject might be worth consideration. Secondly, conviction that there is something interesting about it, and a closer and prolonged inspection. Thirdly, hesitation, obvious depreciation, and doubt, now sitting bolt upright to ponder over the matter, and alternately raising and depressing the head in examination of the wriggling theme, with an action that reminds one irresistibly of an old gentleman looking over and under his spectacles in order to get a better view of some object. Lastly, smack! the tongue is shot out with a loud click, the meal-worm vigorously swept into the mouth with the fore-feet, a visible throb of deglutition, a Dover-to-Calais sort of movement of the shoulders which seems to presage the immediate rentrée of the victim into society once more (it does sometimes, but only as a temporary respite), a solemn ten-second wink, and the thing is done. Half-a-dozen more than satisfy Jack's appetite, as a rule; occasionally, when about to shed his skin, he refuses them altogether. I do not supply him with any food when he is at home, but I regret to say he abused my confidence the other day by wantonly devouring a litter of slow-worms which unfortunately introduced themselves to his notice in the cage—a fact which makes me

now suspect that he knows something about the unaccountable disappearance of a tiny but rare and beautiful African amphisbœna some time ago.

Two things have a perennial attraction for him: the lamp and myself. He will sit up and regard the former with bright-eyed palpitating attention for an hour at a time; then, slewing round—for, such is a toad's triangular shape, that it has to describe the arc of quite a large circle aft in order to turn its head—he stares at me with the same fixed, earnest speculation. Finally, he either settles rotundly down to cogitate upon it, or walks straight off the table, going over the edge without a moment's hesitation, and proceeding across the floor, not a bit disconcerted by his fall, as soon as he pulls himself together. There is a business-like and purposeful integrity about Jack's course which always seems to imply a definite aim in life, very different from the here-there-and-everywhere gadding of certain frivolous green frogs which are his abhorrence. He is the creature of circumstance only in the direction in which he is originally launched; when once started, he goes right ahead with a deliberate emphatic hand-over-hand kind of gait, turning neither to the one side nor the other, and never looking back. If he encounters any obstacle in his path (such as the wall, for instance), he makes a desperate effort to surmount it; failing that, he sits down, with a calm and unprejudiced air, to wait—possibly, since time is no object to a toad, till the side of the house shall crumble in the fulness of years.

He goes his own way and I go mine, until it is time for both of us to retire to bed. Neither of us disturbs or interferes with the other. Sometimes I hear him scrambling in a distant corner, and sometimes he runs against my feet accidentally when they happen to be situated in his line of march. If I put my hand down he will clamber on it and squat there contentedly, though I do not flatter myself that there is any higher motive for his doing so than the vulgar physical warmth of the situation. Occasionally he remarks, "Warr!" in some unexpected quarter, and I respond, "Well, Jack?" but beyond this we are not conversational. Nevertheless, he imparts a certain sense of companionship—just enough, and no more, under the circumstances. A dog or cat provokes caresses, talk, and various diversions prejudicial to work; the most

trustworthy of monkeys or 'coons is a source of anxiety; while, on the other hand, a live bird is about as entertaining as a stuffed specimen at night. Even a pet serpent is not above suspicion; its head may be dozing quietly on one's shoulder while the other end is capsizing something afar off. But Jack is free from guile, doing no mischief and making no noise. He suits me, and I think I suit him. And I am grateful to this poor uncouth reptile for the odd moments of amusement or diverted idea which have relieved weary hours of urging the reluctant quill over ever exigent foolscap.

"Come, Jack! Bedtime, my boy." I shut up shop for the night and go in search of him. I never have any trouble to find him. He does not come to me, but he does not avoid me either; indeed, I generally discover him engaged in that abstruse contemplation of me already mentioned. Up he gets on the hand which is lowered in front of him, settles himself down composedly thereon, apparently for all time, until—suddenly recognising the ferns and grass which spring up around him—he scuffles off, and chanting the burial-service with a final "Warr!" inters himself with all possible expedition.

## GEOFFREY STIRLING.

BY MRS. LEITH ADAMS.

### PART II. CHAPTER VII. IN THE TOILS.

EVERY bough and spray of the trees in the White House garden was glittering with a new and lovely foliage—a gift of passing beauty bestowed by winter's hand—born in a night, and liable to perish with the first breath of thaw. Shining crystals gemmed the grass, and each gable of the old house was outlined by an exquisite garniture of frost.

"We are going to have a cold Christmas," said folks to one another, and boys grinned at the happy prospect of slides to be made for other people to fall down upon.

But the river that ran, swollen and turgid, at the bottom of the White House garden, would give no one the chance of gliding serenely over a frozen surface—not it.

A very low degree below freezing-point was needed to stay that river in its course, and silence its rush and swirl; and even when winter did succeed in making a captive of it, were there not always

pitholes that meant treachery, and lying in wait for the unwary, and a deep place here and there under overhanging boughs that Becklington mothers shuddered to think of?

To-day it ran black and deep, swollen from the autumn rains; and in the perfect stillness that ever broods over a frost-bound world, its low murmuring voice seemed to come close to the ear like the echo of the sea in a shell.

A faint ruddy light came from behind a pile of fleecy clouds in the west, glowed through the high oriel window of the White House library, and, touching the dancing bobbins on Hester Devenant's lace-pillow, turned them ruddy, too, as well as the finger-tips that moved them so deftly to and fro, over and under, across and back again.

When the Becklington public had thought it the right and proper thing that Gabriel Devenant's widow should turn her skill in lace-making to good profit, she had disappointed expectation by never being seen with a bobbin in her hand.

Now that she had been "made a lady of" by some mysterious means known to none—now that she had servants to do her will and a fine house above her head, she had all at once developed a strange love for cushion and dancing bobbins.

Did this fancy on her part arise from a certain hatred of idleness born of her early life of activity? Was thought wont to be so active in her busy brain that active fingers kept welcome pace with it, even while they left it free? Any way, yards of lace, fine as cobwebs, came from that busy loom, while the grave face that bent above the active fingers might have been Penelope's.

Hester made no error in the intricate pattern pinned on the blue silk pillow on her lap, and yet her grave eyes lost no passing look that crossed the face of the man who sat opposite to her.

We say man advisedly, for, though elderly people in the town still sometimes spoke of him as the boy Davey, Davey was in the seven-and-twentieth year of his life, and though still something of a "weakling," not one whom any person of ordinary penetration could judge to be a man lacking in the truest manliness—in moral courage, that is, and power of character.

It was still possible that many might say as they had said of yore, that "summat ailed Davey, though yo' could na ca' him a crookback."

A stoop in the broad shoulders, a peculiar way of carrying the head, a certain pathetic expression in the pale blue eyes, a lanky length in the thin nervous hands, marked Davey as something different to his fellows; but there was nothing effeminate in the face itself, and much that was winning and tender, though the mouth and chin were hidden by a soft growth of beard, veiling the smile that came but seldom, and was more felt than seen.

"How distinctly you hear the river on such a day as this," said Mrs. Devenant; "it is as if everything else went far away and only that came near."

"Yes," said Davey; "the falls just above are full after the rains."

But he spoke as though he were listening more intently for some other sound than that of the falls, and his eyes turned wistfully towards the door.

"Hilda is gone to the vicarage," said Mrs. Devenant quietly; "she will not be back till late, and then Mr. Deane will bring her home."

Hester spoke with the strange gentleness that she gave to Davey and to none else; the gentleness that, as a boy, he had counted as a thing infinitely precious, and that now, as a man, he held even dearer still.

For he thought she had read his heart; that she knew how beautiful a thing life was growing in his eyes, how the sound of a voice, and the echo of a step, made such music for his ears as seemed more the melody of heaven than earth; and how the smile and the step were both her daughter Hilda's.

It must be surely that she read his heart aright, since she could read his thoughts so well!

Had she not answered one but now? Had he not been longing for that closed door to open, and let his fair young love pass in, and had not Mrs. Devenant, kindly cruel, told him she was gone?

For that day at least the White House was doomed to be for Davey a casket without its jewel, a cage without its bird.

He strangled a little sigh in its birth.

With so gracious a hostess surely it were most ungracious for a guest to be glum?

But soon Davey had no temptation to gloom; soon his eyes were shining with an eager interest, his hands pressed one in the other as he talked.

For they spoke of Mr. Geoffrey. To the rest of the world he might be Squire Stirling—Mr. Stirling of Dale End—what the

world would. To Davey he was always Mr. Geoffrey. Only one other name for him existed in Davey's vocabulary of love, and that was "Master."

"I keep hoping things may be better now," he said nervously, warming his hands at the blaze.

"Now Mrs. Geoffrey is dead?" put in his companion, and tap, tap, went the bobbins on their silken bed.

"Oh no, no. I did not mean that," said Davey breathlessly. "What I do mean is this: there are some natures which can bear any kind of suffering better than suspense—waiting for a thing is worse than facing it. Well, I think it is so with my master, and that the fear, the watching, the anxiety of his wife's last illness told upon him terribly. Mrs. Devenant, in all that I have thought and felt about him from the time I was a boy you have been the one, of all the world, to show me most sympathy. You know all that is in my heart about him, do you not? You know how, all my life long, I have thought and dreamt of how he came into his uncle's room, bearing me on his shoulder, laughing, taking me under the shelter of his care, as it were, from that hour, and I not thinking all the while. Without him, I might have been cast out into the world like a mere straw upon a flood, to have drifted I know not where. 'Never forget, lad,' said Mother Susan when she was dying, 'never forget as Maister Geoffrey kep' yo' in the bank, whether or no, and saved me and Dickory fro' breakin' our 'arts after our boy.' And I never do forget, though I hardly think Mr. Geoffrey knows how well I remember. Once, I had been telling Master Ralph the story (he was a little fellow then, and loved to hear a tale told in the twilight)—well, when he and I went into Mr. Geoffrey's room a little later, he ran up to his father, and 'Dad,' says he, 'I'm glad you didn't let them send Davey to the poor-house.' Mr. Geoffrey looked up from his book, puzzled for a moment, and then his face grew all bright—you know how it grows like sunshine when he smiles?—and he held out his hand to me, and 'Davey,' he said, 'I think I did myself a good turn that time, as well as you; what do you think about it—eh?' It made me so happy, Mrs. Devenant, to hear him speak like that; my heart grew so full as I listened, standing there with my hand in his, that I could find no words to answer him—not one! It is a

long time ago now—a long, long time—but I shall never forget it: how the child climbed upon his father's knee, and put his arms about his neck, and how Mr. Geoffrey held out his hand for mine. I seemed to be drawn so near the two of them—who were themselves so close together—that I could never get far from them any more. When all that terrible trouble came, it seemed as though I were struck through them—the father and the son—always together in my mind; always, as it were, two in one."

"And yet," said Mrs. Devenant, "they are often separated now; young Ralph is oftener away than at home."

"Yes," said Davey, his delicately traced brows knitting in a sort of hazy trouble. "I know, and I often fear the master is lonely without what makes the whole place seem full of light and happy sounds when it is there. There are people like that, you know, people who make you feel as if all the world is light and warm, just because they are in it, and you are near to them."

Mrs. Devenant looked up a moment, then down again with a faint smile softening her mouth.

Was he not in truth laying his heart bare? Did she not know he was thinking of Hilda as he talked? Did she not hold in her hand the magnet that should draw him to the White House when she would, and—as love that has hope to live upon never stands still, but must ever be taking a step forward—would not the power of the magnet grow until all other influences, however potent, should pale beside Hilda's?

"If this is so," said Hester, passing over unnoticed the concluding rhapsody of Davey's last speech; "if Mr. Geoffrey misses the bright presence of his son so much, is it not strange that he sends the boy roaming all over the world?"

"Yes; I have often thought so."

"What do you think is his reason for so much self-sacrifice?"

"I cannot tell."

Tap, tap, went the bobbins on their silken bed, having all the talk to themselves for awhile, since the other two kept silence.

Davey, leaning his head upon his hand, watched the wood embers fall and glow.

And, though the bobbins never ceased their soft low clatter, Hester Devenant watched him keenly for a moment or two.

Then she broke into new ground:

"How glad you were when Mr. Geoffrey

made old Anthony his steward ! Such a letter as you wrote me, Davey ! And yet I could not help fancying you felt as if you were forgotten—still doomed to add up the corn-merchant's books, with your heart up at Dale End, with master and agent."

"Perhaps I did, but I was sure Mr. Geoffrey would think of me in the end, and so he did, you see ; and then, Mrs. Devenant, I got the best of it—didn't I ? "

Davey smiled at the thought of having got the better of old Anthony, and the smile, climbing to his eyes, made them very sweet and bright, and no more dreamy and wistful as when looking at the fire.

"You mean that you live with Mr. Geoffrey ? " said Hester, pushing the curtain, near which she sat, further back, for the day was waning fast, and lace-making requires light.

"Yes ; Anthony has quite a fine house, and dear old Mrs. Geddes walks 'in silk attire,' but I—I am near my master always."

"You make an excellent secretary, Davey, I doubt not—so neat-handed as you are, and with such a head for figures."

"I try to be more than that to Mr. Geoffrey. I try to make up to him for the loss of Master Ralph when he is away. I watch and wait, and seize upon any little thing that comes in my way, and seems a possible thing to do for him. It makes me very happy if he seems to find any comfort in me."

"But you speak of Mr. Geoffrey as if he were one who stands in need of comfort—who is preyed upon by some secret sorrow that bears him to the ground ; not as if he were—as everyone says he is—the luckiest man in all the countryside."

"Do I ? " said Davey. "Have I spoken of him like that, or is it you who read the thoughts of my heart like an open book ? "

"Then you have thought it might be so ? You have fancied that some secret grief weighs upon his heart and conscience ? "

"His heart ? yes ; his conscience ? no. Nothing can weigh on the conscience save sin, and which of us can show cleaner hands, a lovelier life ? Which of us can lay claim to having garnered up so much love, so much reverence, from those around us, as my dear master, Geoffrey Stirling ? "

The bobbins no longer tapped light heels and danced upon their silken bed. The cushion was set aside. It was "blind man's holiday" now, that pleasant hour "between

the lights," when the most industrious deem it no crime to be idle awhile. Mrs. Devenant sat still, with quiet hands folded, while the cat purred on the rug at her feet, and the shadows born of fire-light began to flicker on the dark oak panels and on the low ceiling ; and all the goblins on the mantel-shelf stirred and gibed in the flicker of the flame.

So still was Mrs. Devenant, so still the room after Davey had done speaking, that the rush of the river almost seemed to have come close up under the window. Like a silhouette against the long breadth of faintly-lighted casement, Davey could see the beautifully-poised head and gracious profile of the woman who had chosen him out from among his fellows, to make him her trusted friend ; but he could not see her face—so rapidly had the light faded—or he might have been startled at the strange and unwonted expression it wore.

A look of pity—nay, more, of compunction and bitter regret, and yet an unfaltering, implacable resolve. So might the inquisitor of old have looked upon a young and zealous adherent of a doomed creed, regretful that the torture was inevitable, though never once wavering in the resolve to apply it.

"Davey, you are a warm lover ; would you be as good a hater, I wonder ? "

The words startled him, breaking abruptly as they did on the silence.

"I don't know," he said ; "I never tried. It would be horrible really to hate anyone—I mean so that you would gladly bring them to shame and sorrow, or see them suffer and not try to help them, since Christ died for all."

The last five words were spoken softly, almost under his breath, as if he were touching some thought so deep and holy that it must needs be handled timidly.

Mrs. Devenant pressed back the rippling hair from her temples. She was conscious of a sense of oppression—an air surrounding her in which she could not breathe freely.

"There is such a thing as wrong that cannot be forgiven," she said, rising into sudden passion, as her way was when much moved.

"By man—yes ; by God—no," put in Davey in the same hushed voice in which he had before spoken.

"God judges sin as hardly as man."

"Yes ; there are some sins He hates more than others, such as pride and revenge—sins that rear themselves up

against Himself, as it were. But surely there is no sin beyond forgiveness——”

Here Davey paused, appalled at the result of his words.

“ What have I said ? Have I made you angry, dear Mrs. Devenant ? ”

He might well be aghast, for Hester, with sundry inarticulate sounds as of passionate anger but ill-restrained, had started to her feet and was pacing the room from end to end, twisting and contorting in her restless hands the handkerchief she had taken from her pocket and, for a moment, had pressed against her lips as if to stem the torrent of words that panted for egress.

Seeing that Davey was gravely perturbed, was in fact standing by the mantelshelf, the picture of mingled amaze and distress, she came to his side, laid her hand on his shoulder, and laughed.

Such a laugh that instead of being reassured by it, Davey shrank back against the sculptured goblins almost as if he were clinging to them for protection.

He had heard of Hester Devenant's temper, but never, all through the long years of their friendship, had he seen a display of it until now.

The experience was painful.

Hester's shrewd eyes read his face aright. Her influence had received a shock. Her power must be reinstated, and that promptly.

“ Davey, I am irritable and out of sorts to-day. Forgive me, dear. Above all, don't talk like a Methodist ; it sets all my teeth on edge.”

The grave questioning eyes seemed hard to meet, shining as they did in the fire-light, and holding a strange awful something in their depths that reminded her of—yes, the look in Gabriel's, her husband's, when first he stood face to face with the demon that possessed his wife.

But Davey was coming round—rapidly, too. Who can gauge the charm of that one word “ dear,” uttered by a woman so little given to caress or words of tenderness ? Besides, was not Davey looking at and judging her who was Hilda's mother ? The recollection of that one fact brought palliation with it, and Hester's unwonted tenderness completed the spell.

She would not speak to him like that, thought Davey, knowing as she must know all his heart, unless, knowing, she was ready to smile upon his hopes, if Hilda would.

Of that aspect of the matter Davey, as yet, dared not even trust himself to think. He was hardly reconciled to the fact of his

own boldness in daring to love that stately maid, much less could he bring himself to hope for return of this venturesome love of his.

Time alone could tell how that would be—time, and loving service upon his part, humbly laid at the loved one's feet.

Meanwhile the utterance of that one little word “ dear,” seemed to Davey an omen of surpassing blessedness.

Hester had spoken it (or so he thought) just in the tone a mother might use to a well-beloved son. Was he not in very truth that in heart to her already ? Why then should he be so prompt to judge her ?

Thinking these thoughts he smiled, and Hester, quick to catch the happy change of mood, smiled back.

The gusty storm was over. Peace reigned once more supreme. The two stood by the fire, in close company with the gibing goblins.

“ So you and Mr. Geoffrey have Dale End all to yourselves ? ” said Hester presently. Apparently she had as much difficulty in dragging her thoughts away from Dale End, as Davey oftentimes experienced in disentangling his from the White House and its inmates.

“ Yes, but we shall not have it for long. Christmas is not far off now, and then Master Ralph will be home. It will be a sad home-coming enough for him, to find his poor mother gone and his father looking so worn and ill. But one can see how Mr. Geoffrey is looking forward to it for all that. He's in and out of the boy's room a dozen times a day, and it's always ‘ we'll do this,’ and ‘ we'll do that when Ralph comes.’ ”

“ Your being away when Mrs. Geoffrey died was a pity ; you might have been a great help and comfort.”

“ I don't know ; there is little lack of help or comfort either when the vicar or his wife are about a place. Mrs. Geoffrey couldn't bear her out of her sight, and he was with my master pretty near night and day. Old Anthony used to be there a good deal, and he says he never saw such comfort given in time of trouble. I was the best help where I was, seeing to a lot of business for Mr. Geoffrey in London.”

“ You are growing quite a traveller.”

“ Yes, and I like it too, and Mr. Geoffrey says I manage the business well, and to his satisfaction. I would travel thousands of miles to hear him say that at the end of it, and think nothing of the journey, that would I. This time I had pleasant company

coming home, for Amos Callender had been south, buying hides, and we travelled home together. He's a man worth listening to, with a gift of pithy speech that takes my fancy marvellous well. By the way, I saw him again a day or two ago (Mr. Geoffrey is giving a prize for window-gardening, and Old Bess is proud of her show, so I went to see the sight), and he was telling me of this foolish talk about a ghost having been seen up our way. I hope such gabble won't reach the master's ears, nor Hilda's either for matter of that. It might fright her to think of it, coming home from Mrs. Deane's of an afternoon now the days draw in so."

"Who saw this ghost?"

"Jeremy Bindwhistle first, and then three or four of them together—little Jake among the rest."

"Jake is a shrewd fellow!"

"Yes, and so is Farmer Dale an honest one."

"You say true in that, Davey. He once offered to do me a good turn. I have not forgotten. He sings hymns with a lusty voice, I can tell you."

"It would be hard to beat Jake at that game," said Davey, laughing.

"But where did they see this ghostly thing?"

"In the Dale End shrubbery, where the woodland skirts the road."

"Whose ghost was it?"

"The ghost of the man who robbed the bank, so they say."

Hester's breath began to come in little gasps, and she clutched hold of the mantel-shelf as if to steady herself.

"Why, I have frightened you with all this nonsense," said Davey with concern.

"No, no," she said; "tell me more. Why did they say it was that?"

"Because it wore a waggoner's frock, and had red locks hanging about its face, and, don't you remember, at that time

there was some talk about a man in a—"

"Yes, yes, but why did they take it for a ghost? Surely, some poor fellow on the tramp—"

"They say it had the face of a dead man, and a dead man's eyes, wide, staring, blind."

She sat down quickly in a low chair by the hearth, crouching over the fire, and leaning her forehead on her open palms.

He thought he read but too well the cause of her agitation. His own unthinking folly had brought it all about.

She was trembling from head to foot. Poor Davey could see her shadow vibrate on the wall.

He knelt beside her, pleading for himself.

"I ought not to have told you such things. I ought to have remembered how you have suffered in the past. Do forgive me before I go, for go I must—I have overstayed my time as it is."

She lifted her face to his, and there he saw—not that he had thought to see, a tearful pallid cheek and timid eye; but the glitter and fire of a fierce and cruel joy.

"There is nothing to forgive," she said, still all a-tremble, but not with fear; "I love to hear a ghost-story. When you hear more of this one, come and tell it me, and—Davey—Hilda shall listen too."

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